Michael Finnissy

# Maldon & other choral works

EXAUDI • James Weeks *director*

1 **Maldon** 22'38
Richard Jackson *solo baritone*
Andrew Connington, Richard Watkin *trombones*
Joby Burgess, Julian Warburton *percussion*
Daniel Hyde *organ*

2 **Palm-Sunday** 11'04
Alan Thomas *guitar*, Jub Davis *double bass*
Joby Burgess *vibraphone*
Michael Finnissy *piano*

3 **Vertue** 9'23
Michael Finnissy, Philip Howard *piano duo*

4 **Forget-me-not** 5'53
Alan Thomas *guitar*, Jub Davis *double bass*
Joby Burgess *cymbal*, Michael Finnissy *piano*

5 **Descriptive Jottings of London** 4'45
Howard Skempton *accordion*
Michael Finnissy *piano*

6 **Anima Christi** 21'17
Iestyn Davies *alto*, Nicholas Mulroy *tenor*
Daniel Hyde *organ*

**Total timing:** **75'23**

**EXAUDI**
Julia Doyle, Juliet Fraser, Amy Haworth *soprano*
Ian Aitkenhead, Iestyn Davies, Keith Roberts *alto*
Edward Goater, Rupert Jennings,
Nicholas Mulroy *tenor*
Gareth Jones, Cheyney Kent,
Maurice MacSweeney *bass*
James Weeks *director*

photo: Kate Vandyck

# The Choral Music of Michael Finnissy

by James Weeks

Even for listeners long familiar with the Protean inspiration of Michael Finnissy, his large output of choral music stands as a bewilderingly pluralistic, determinedly unclassifiable phenomenon. Each piece forms a dialogue with a multitude of choral music traditions while always insisting on its own necessary modernity and apartness: "I do not see these pieces as discontinuous with choral tradition", Finnissy has said, "nor do I see them as duplicates of that tradition. They draw on tradition quite heavily, though occasionally questioningly or with irony: they are about contemporary memory or experience."

As ever with Finnissy, that memory is both long and extremely wide-ranging: in *Anima Christi* we are presented with a patchwork of sacred musics, from lavishly ornate plainchant to simple hymn-singing and organ chorale preludes; in *Palm-Sunday* a choral work by Bruckner is distorted and overlaid with the chiming of bells; in *Vertue* and *Forget-me-not* we encounter the unison song and ballad traditions, re-examined from two quite different standpoints; and in the great battle scena *Maldon* the canonic modal writing carries echoes of the sacred music of Szymanowski, Stravinsky and Gorecki.

Equally various are the processes of transformation (or remembering, or experiencing) that Finnissy brings to bear on this polyphony of influence, and it is in these processes that the music reveals its precise relationship to those traditions which it references. Crucial to Finnissy's understanding of choral music is that it is not simply a cultural artefact but the material of living traditions – of sacred music-making, of amateur choral singing, of national or local styles of choral singing, of Christian worship itself. Of course, in using these materials one can not only allude to but also identify with that tradition, albeit in a manner more or less self-conscious or qualified, and in this respect these pieces are qualitatively different from those works of Finnissy's which keep a greater critical distance from their sources. In *Anima Christi*, for instance, we see him placing himself, as a Christian, within an existing tradition of church music, as well as within the modern community of the church.

Thus, too, in *Forget-me-not,* the thirteen-year-old composer writes a *real* – almost Edwardian – ballad, however ironized or made strange by a precocious 'atonal' harmony. (It is perhaps not so surprising that a childhood work should seem so at home here: all of these works share its qualities of directness and sincerity.)

At the centre of this music is the Choir itself, a communal body of people articulating words and music together: they are musically of single mind and purpose, unified (co-operative) rather than diverse (conflicting). The types and textures of choral writing Finnissy employs reflect these concerns on both aesthetic and pragmatic levels: many of the works were written for amateur forces, hence the use of simple unison or homophony in place of the more complex or 'sophisticated' polyphony. Even the apparently contrapuntal texture of *Palm-Sunday* is really more of a smudged homophony, and indeed part of the difficulty of performing the work lies in the fact that unlike normal polyphony the lines do not support and articulate each other, but instead get awkwardly in each other's way – a nice analogue for the crowd scene which it evokes.

Against this choral mass, Finnissy sets a series of solitary figures which might be seen as a counterbalancing force of individualism: the Jesus of the *Palm-Sunday* narrative (alone within the surging crowd), Byrtnoth (alone within the surging battle of *Maldon*), the two soloists in *Anima Christi* (alone in their imprecations), and William McGonagall in the piano and accordion of *Descriptive Jottings of London*, alone in a foreign city – a city indeed which was inexplicably immune to his talents when he visited it. Likewise, Finnissy himself appears in these pieces simultaneously as insider and outsider, an individual placing himself within a larger tradition and celebrating this belonging without allowing himself a complete identification. The resulting works, uniquely compounded of familiarity and strangeness, are some of his boldest yet most approachable and moving achievements.

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# Notes on the Music

by Michael Finnissy

***Maldon*** was commissioned in 1991 to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of a battle fought near the Essex village of that name and celebrated in one of the most important surviving fragments of Anglo-Saxon poetry. I decided to set only a part of this poem (less than a quarter of it) and to open it out to become a more general statement about war, adding some verses from a later period which reflect on the transience of earthly life (and which coincidentally mention hawks, the bird that Byrtnoth releases at the start of the poem). The Anglo-Saxon is rendered as a series of eye-witness accounts by the solo baritone, close-up and highly-charged, an expressionistic modern journalese. The choir, in a different time and place and expressing a very different philosophy, are dovetailed into this narrative. Their language is less descriptive, rather more distanced and formal (13th-century English), and it is set to a symmetrical series of five 'canons', the first and fifth of which have their answer at the perfect fourth, the second and fourth canon at the same interval but in inversion and subsequently with both voices overlaid, and the central one more freely imitative and chromatic (very like the archaism of Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater*). The solo voice combines modal with microtonal writing, mostly syllabic, sometimes ascending or descending by adjacent semitones, occasionally breaking out into intricate and high-lying melismata. The two trombones and two percussionists evoke sounds of nature (water) and the military (swords clashing, drums beating) from past to present. The different languages, verbal and musical, interact rather as in a debate, the outcome of which is deliberately open-ended.

# Maldon

**Baritone** *...It was broken. He ordered the young warriors to leave their horses, drive them far away. Advance. Think of great strength, unswerving courage.*

**Chorus**

| | |
|---|---|
| Thereinne is day withouten night, | *Therein is day without night.* |
| Withouten strengthe and might, | *Without end to strength and might* |
| And wreche of everiche fo. | *And wrecking of every foe.* |

**Baritone** *A Viking messenger stood on the river bank called out: 'Pay tribute. Buy safety with gold. Do not tempt strong men to fight you.' Byrtnoth replied angrily, shield and spear raised. 'Hear what* we *say: An earl stands undaunted beside his men. Heathen host shall fall in battle. Viking seafarers shall not steal our treasure.' He ordered his men take weapons, and stand along the river's edge. Yet neither side could approach the other as water flowed between them. Tide rising after ebb. Impatient men waited.*

**Chorus**

| | |
|---|---|
| Wher beth they, beforen us weren, | *Where are they, that were before us,* |
| Houndes laden and havekes beren, | *Leading hounds and bearing hawks,* |
| And hadden feld and wode? | *And having field and wood?* |

**Baritone** *Tide turns. Waters part. Now they can cross. Cross with all speed. Warriors into battle. No-one can tell who will have victory. Wolves of slaughter advanced – Viking army. Unafraid, moving through cold, gleaming water. Byrtnoth and his warriors stood ready to meet their enemy. Time had come for doomed men to perish. In the sky above, ravens wheeled, eagles flew, greedy for carrion. A cry rang out, then dust and blood mixed with earth.*

**Chorus**

| | |
|---|---|
| Thou ert erthe to gode sede | *You are earth for good seed* |
| On thee lighte the Hevene dews | *On you alight the heavenly dews* |
| Of thee sprong the edi bled | *Of you sprang the blessed fruit* |
| Holy Gost hir on thee sews | *Holy Ghost has sown it in you* |
| Thu bring us ut of care, ut of dred. | *You bring us out of care, out of dread.* |



**Baritone** *A Viking soldier leapt out. Ran towards Byrtnoth. Byrtnoth drew his broad and bright-edged sword from its sheath. But swift Viking struck him – cut through his right arm – gold-hilted sword fell from his grasp. Byrtnoth could no longer stand firm. In pain, he cried toward heaven: 'I thank you, Lord over all, for the joy that I know in this world. But now, gentle God, I need that you bless my spirit, give safe journey to my soul – O Prince of Angels, I pray you not to let devils harm me.' In battle-fury none heard – and Vikings hacked him cruelly to death. Slaughtered both warriors who defended him. Aelfnoth and Wulfmar – their lives given up beside their master.*

**Chorus**

| | |
|---|---|
| They beren hem well swithe heye. | *They bore themselves with much pride* |
| And in a twinkling of an ey, | *And, in a twinkling of an eye,* |
| Hoere soules weren forloren. | *Their souls were lost.* |

**Baritone** And Dunnere brandished his spear – cried out – bade all take revenge for Byrtnoth: ' He among you who would avenge his lord must never weaken, nor mourn for life!'

**Chorus**

| | |
|---|---|
| Wher is that lawing and that song, | *Where is that laughing and that song,* |
| Tho havekes and tho houndes? | *Those hawks and those hounds?* |
| That wele is comen to welaway? | *That well-being is turned to wailing?* |

**Baritone** So they advanced. Careless of their fate. Vikings thrust forward, enraged by battle. Many spears tore unguarded flesh. 'Mind must be harder, spirit bolder, and heart stronger, as our might lessens. Here lies our leader, cut down in battle. Ever must he mourn who thinks now to leave this game of war.'

*Baritone: from* The Battle of Maldon, *Anglo-Saxon epic fragment, c.1000*
*Chorus: 13th-century anonymous English poem*

***Palm-Sunday*** also edits together texts from different historical periods, although here they are responses to exactly the same event. Henry Vaughan's poem, which gives the work its title, is a passionate meditation on the persecuted Christ, whose death will be "Man's life": the same Christ who is witnessed on His palm-strewn entry into Jerusalem according to the gospel reports of Matthew and John. An elision of these gospel texts is sung by the sopranos and tenors in the Latin of the Vulgate. As the imagined procession appears (at Vaughan's words "Lift up your heads… ") an ensemble of chiming and resounding instruments suddenly enters, continuing throughout the central part of the work and disappearing at the words "flowers to wellcome thee", leaving the voices to end unaccompanied. The two layers of words are embedded in a musical citation – of Bruckner's *Vexilla Regis*, itself deriving from the appropriate liturgical chant for Palm Sunday. The diverse elements interweave, the music does not aim to be a 'setting' of either text but rather an absorption of both into the totality of a musical composition. Nor is musical differentiation applied here to the text materials: their historical particularity is not a significant element. *Palm-Sunday* was commissioned by the BBC, and it is dedicated to Jeanice Brooks and Mark Everist.



**Sopranos and Tenors**

Et cum appropinquassent Ierosolymis, et venissent Bethphage ad montem Oliveti: tunc Iesus misit duos discipulos, dicens eis: Ite in castellum, quod contra vos est, et statim invenietis asinam alligatam, et pullum cum ea: solvite et adducite mihi. *(Matthew 21. 1-2)*

Et invenit Iesus asellum, et sedit super eum, ecce rex tuus venit sedens super pullum asinae. *(John 12. 14-15)*

Plurima autem turba straverunt vestimenta sua in via: alii autem caedebant ramos de arboribus, et sternebant in via. *(Matthew 21. 8)*

In crastinum autem turba multa, quae venerat ad diem festum, cum audissent quia venit Iesus Ierosolymam, acceperunt ramos palmarum, et processerunt obviam ei, et clamabant: Hosanna, Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini, rex Israel. *(John 12. 13)*

Turbae autem, quae praecedebant, et quae sequebantur, clamabant, dicentes, Hosanna filio David: Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini: hosanna in altissimis. Et cum intrasset Ierosolymam, commota est universa civitas, dicens: Quis est hic? Populi autem dicebant: Hic est Iesus propheta a Nazareth Galilaeae. *(Matthew 21. 9-10-11)*

**Altos and Basses**

Come drop your branches, strow the way,
Whom sufferings make most green and gay.
The King of grief, the Man of sorrow,
Your shades and freshness comes to borrow.
Put on, put on your best array;
Let the joy'd road make holy-day.
Trees, flowers, and herbs; birds, beasts and stones,
That since man fell expect with groans
To see the Lamb, which all at once,
Lift up your heads and leave your moans!
For here comes he
Whose death will be
Man's life, and your full liberty.
Joys provoke the distant skie,
Where thrones and Seraphins reply;
Hosanna.
Dear feast of Palms, of flowers and dew!
Whose fruitful dawn sheds hopes and lights;
Thy bright solemnities did shew
The third glad day through two sad nights.
I'll get me up before the sun,
I'll cut me boughs off many a tree,
And all alone full early run
To gather flowers to wellcome thee.
Then like the Palm, though wrong, I'll bear,
I will be still a childe, still meek
As the poor Ass which the proud jear,
And onely my dear *Jesus* seek.

*Henry Vaughan (1621-95), from 'Palm Sunday'*

# Vertue

***Vertue*** sets George Herbert's poem twice. The different responses, one in duple-, one in triple-metre, are framed by rhythmically free piano-duet prologue and epilogue, and separated by a piano-solo interlude. The first setting is accompanied by duet, the second by solo. Both reveal my indebtedness to the music of both Satie and Hanns Eisler. The instrumental episodes are variously reflective of the vocal material, initially compressing it into a series of chords, stark – perhaps even grim – in character. At the centre of the work is a volatile, disruptive solo which eventually settles onto repetitive figurations which mostly oscillate between two notes (a feature in the accompaniment to the second setting). At the work's conclusion a lengthy and texturally wide-spread apotheosis of the previous music occurs in which nebulous fragments of melodies and harmonies are re-ordered and combined. The original version of *Vertue* was commissioned by Finchley Children's Music Group.



Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridall of the earth and skie:
The dew shall weep thy fall to night;
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angrie and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye:
Thy root is ever in its grave
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet dayes and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie;
My musick shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Onely a sweet and vertuous soul,
Like season'd timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

*George Herbert (1593 -1633)*

# Forget-me-not

My mother's sister, Sheila Parsonson – to whom ***Forget-me-not*** is dedicated – had brought a volume of McGonagall's poetry back from a holiday in Scotland. I also heard some of it declaimed by Dame Edith Evans at a Hoffnung concert, and it had the championship of Spike Milligan – such are the serendipitous inspirations behind this piece. The piece dates from a time when I was interested in writing music in 'twelve-note technique', having also been bought Josef Rufer's explanation of it. In my daydreaming I recognised this as the music made by outsiders. It made me feel better about being outside. I actually preferred its sound-world to the ideological concerns, particularly the potential for asymmetry of melodic design and disruption of conventional harmony. In other ways *Forget-me-not* is more a reflection on the amount of very mundane Edwardian balladry still being performed during the 1950s, and it is from this that the dominant characteristics are drawn: repetitive (strophic) melody with very obvious accompaniment, rather melodramatic articulation (not only of the words but of 'structure' generally – for example, the interpolation of instrumental 'ritornelli' – here the initial appearances of the guitar), and exaggerated word-painting or textual mimesis (Edwin's doom-laden swim across the river). The principal melodic material bears a strong resemblance to Thomas Attwood's three-part glee *In Liquid Notes*, though the accompanying chords (originally for wind quintet rather than piano) are atonal and not 'functional harmony' – nor are they particularly supportive to the singers! There are some excisions to the final three verses of McGonagall's poem: with the demise not only of Edwin but of any regular accompaniment to the vocal line, the music breaks up into fragments (intended to evoke distress and discomfort), leaving the upper voices alone and seemingly disoriented.



A gallant knight and his betroth'd bride,
Were walking one day by a river side,
They talk'd of love, and they talk'd of war,
And how very foolish lovers are.

At length the bride to the knight did say,
'There have been many young ladies led astray
By believing in all their lovers said,
And you are false to me I am afraid.'

'No, Ellen, I was never false to thee,
I never gave thee cause to doubt me;
I have always lov'd thee and do still,
And no other woman your place shall fill.'

'Dear Edwin, it may be true, but I am in doubt,
But there's some beautiful flowers here about,
Growing on the other side of the river,
But how to get one, I cannot discover.'

'Dear Ellen, they seem beautiful indeed,
But of them, dear, take no heed;
Because they are on the other side,
Besides, the river is deep and wide.'

'Dear Edwin, as I doubt your love to be untrue,
I ask one favour now from you:
Go! fetch me a flower from across the river,
Which will prove you love me more than ever.'

'Dear Ellen! I will try and fetch you a flower
If it lies within my power
To prove that I am true to you,
And what more can your Edwin do?'

So he leap'd into the river wide,
And swam across to the other side,
To fetch a flower for his young bride,
Who watched him eagerly on the other side.

So he pluck'd a flower right merrily
Which seemed to fill his heart with glee,
That it would please his lovely bride;
But, alas! he never got to the other side.

For when he tried to swim across,
All power of his body he did loss,
But before he sank in the river wide,
He flung the flowers to his lovely bride.

And he cried, 'Oh, heaven!...
My dearest Ellen!... I bid thee adieu!'

Then she wrung her hands in wild despair...
And she cried...
'I'll name this flower Forget-me-not...

And I'll remember thee...

And... place my affection on this little flower.'

*William McGonagall 1830?-1902*

***Descriptive Jottings of London*** seems to me an evocation of that city's capacity both to energise and to alienate. I have tried to make McGonagall himself present, in the person of the independent accordion and piano parts. This element of the music is not vertically aligned with the voices, but is docile and rambling, obviously Scots (quoting Scottish folksong) and also somewhat pious (the odd bit of Sunday organ-music). Much of the text is descriptive, like the gospel accounts in *Palm Sunday* or the soloist's 'reportage' in *Maldon*. It does not recollect 'in tranquillity' so much as restlessly enumerate the tourist hot-spots. In respect to the original conception of the poem, the vocal setting (in two parts except for the final bars) is strophic, carrying the initial melody alternately in the upper or lower voice. I have omitted the two and a half verses which apostrophise the "great preacher" Mr Spurgeon, and made use of variant readings of the lines about the lions in Trafalgar Square. *Descriptive Jottings of London* is dedicated to James Weeks and EXAUDI and was first performed by them in the National Portrait Gallery, London, in October 2003.



As I stood upon London Bridge and viewed the mighty throng
Of thousands of people in cabs and 'busses rapidly whirling along,
All furiously driving to and fro,
Up one street and down another as quick as they could go:

Then I was struck with the discordant sound of human voices there,
Which seemed to me like wild geese cackling in the air:
And the river Thames is a most beautiful sight,
To see the steamers sailing upon it by day and by night.

And the Tower of London is most gloomy to behold,
And the crown of England lies there, begemmed with precious stones and gold;
King Henry the Sixth was murdered there by the Duke of Glo'ster,
And when he killed him with his sword he called him an impostor.

St. Paul's Cathedral is the finest building that ever I did see;
There's nothing can surpass it in the city of Dundee,
Because it's most magnificent to behold
With its beautiful dome and spire glittering like gold.

And as for Nelson's Monument that stands in Trafalgar Square,
It is a most stately monument I most solemnly declare,
And towering defiantly very high,
Which arrests strangers' attention while passing by.

Then there's two beautiful water-fountains spouting up very high,
Where the weary traveller can drink when he feels dry;
And at the foot of the monument there's three bronze lions in grand array,
Which ought to drive dull care away
As the stranger gazes there'on,
Unless he is very woebegone.

Then there's Petticoat Lane I venture to say,
It's a wonderful place on the Sabbath day;
There wearing apparel can be bought to suit the young or old
For the ready cash – silver, coppers, or gold.

Oh! mighty city of London! you are wonderful to see,
And thy beauties no doubt fill the tourist's heart with glee...

*William McGonagall*

# Anima Christi

The text of ***Anima Christi*** is a synthesis of three different sources, the main one being the eponymous 14th-century devotional prayer, sung in Latin by the two soloists. This is first joined at the beginning and end of the piece by short fragments from the third and fourth parts of the *Didache* (the 2nd-century compilation of the teaching of the twelve apostles), sung in Greek by a distant group of 'ecstatic' soprano voices. It is also inter-cut with George Herbert's poem *Easter* set as simple hymnody for three-voice choir. These are all edited together with elaborate organ solos evocative of 17th-century North German chorale preludes – variant settings (introspective, elaborate and chromatic) of *Jesu, der du meine Seele* and *Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele*. While most of these 'archetypes' remain unchanged, the plainsong-style writing for the soloists is constantly transforming: stridently overlaid with itself at the start, ornately woven over long-held drones in the alto solo, finally transformed into an atonal canonic *alla Sarabanda* (there's a fugue in this vein by my teacher Bernard Stevens) in the tenor solo. I have endeavoured not to 'over-cook' these different materials, but allow each a measure of crisp independence within the whole, fashioning, in effect, a diverse musical community in which differing styles of utterance coexist as equals. The original version of *Anima Christi* was commissioned by Brighton Philharmonic Choir, and is dedicated to my partner Philip Adams, who played the organ at the work's first performance.



**Soloists**

| | |
|---|---|
| Anima Christi, sanctifica me; | *Soul of Christ, bless me;* |
| Corpus Christi, salva me; | *Body of Christ, save me;* |
| Sanguis Christi inebria me; | *Blood of Christ, intoxicate me;* |
| Aqua lateris Christi, lava me; | *Water of Christ's side, wash me;* |
| Passio Christi, conforta me; | *Suffering of Christ, comfort me;* |
| O bone Iesu, exaudi me; | *O good Jesus, hear me;* |
| Intra vulnera tua, absconda me; | *Hide me among your wounds;* |
| Ne permittas me separari a te; | *Let me never be separated from you;* |
| Ab hoste maligno defende me; | *Defend me from harmful foes;* |
| In hora mortis meae voca me; | *Call me in the hour of my death;* |
| Et iube me venire ad te. | *And bid me come to you.* |
| Ut cum sanctis tuis laudem te; | *Thus with your saints will I praise you;* |
| In saecula saeculorum. Amen. | *World without end. Amen.* |
| | *(Medieval prayer)* |

**Sopranos**

Teknon mou, tou lalountos soi ton logon tou Theou mnēsthēsē nuktos kai hēmeras, timēseis de auton hōs kurion; hothen gar hē kuriotēs laleitai, ekei kurios estin.

Ta sumbainonta soi energēmata hōs agatha prosdexē, eidōs hoti ater Theou ouden ginetai.

*My child, you shall remember, day and night, him who speaks the word of God to you; and you shall honour him as the Lord, for where the Lord's nature is spoken of, he is present.*
*Receive the accidents that befall you as good, knowing that nothing happens without God.*

*(The Didache, IV.1 and III.10)*

**Altos, Tenors and Basses**

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
Without delayes,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With him mayst rise:
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more just.

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art
The crosse taught all wood to resound his name
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song
Pleasant and long:
Or since all musick is but three parts vied
And multiplied;
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with his sweet art.

I got me flowers to straw thy way;
I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day,
And broughtst thy sweets along with thee.

The Sunne arising in the East,
Though he give light, and th'East perfume;
If they should offer to contest
With thy arising, they presume.

Can there be any day but this,
Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?
We count three hundred, but we misse:
There is but one, and that one ever.

*George Herbert: 'Easter'*



## MICHAEL FINNISSY

Michael Finnissy was born in Tulse Hill, London in 1946. He was a Foundation Scholar at the Royal College of Music, London, where he studied composition with Bernard Stevens and Humphrey Searle, and piano with Edwin Benbow and Ian Lake. Afterwards, he studied in Italy with Roman Vlad.

Finnissy created the music department of the London School of Contemporary Dance, and has been associated as composer with many British dance companies including London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Ballet Rambert, Strider, and Second Stride. He has taught at Dartington Summer School, Winchester College, the junior department of the Royal College of Music, Chelsea College of Art, and is guest lecturer at many colleges and universities. He has also been musician in residence to the Victorian College of the Arts, the City of Caulfield in Australia, and the East London Late Starters Orchestra. In 1999 he was made Professor of Composition at the University of Southampton.

Finnissy has been featured composer at the Bath, Huddersfield, and Almeida festivals, and his works are widely performed and broadcast worldwide. As a pianist he is particularly associated with the commissioning and performing of new British work; composers who have written pieces specially for him include Elizabeth Lutyens, Judith Weir, James Dillon, Oliver Knussen, Nigel Osborne, Chris Newman, Howard Skempton, and Andrew Toovey, with some of these works having been recorded for NMC (on NMC D002). NMC has also recorded his major orchestral score *Red Earth* (NMC D040S).

In 1990 Finnissy was appointed President of the International Society of Contemporary Music. He was re-elected in 1993, and in 1998 was made an honorary member of the ISCM. In 1999 he was appointed Senior Fellow of the KBC-chair in New Music at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium for two years. The appointment included the commission for a work for the Beethoven Academie, *Onbevooroordeeld Leven*. 1996, Finnissy's fiftieth birthday year, saw recitals of the complete piano music by Ian Pace, a disc of chamber works on NMC – *Mars+Venus*, performed by IXION (NMC D043) – and the publication of *Unknown Ground* (Ashgate), a study of Finnissy's music. A cycle of CDs on the Metier label which includes *Folklore, Gershwin Arrangements,* works for string quartet, *Seven Sacred Motets*, and most recently *Kulamen Dilan* has been released to great critical acclaim.

## RICHARD JACKSON

BARITONE
Richard Jackson has recently made a name for himself as a specialist in new music, creating major roles at London's Almeida theatre, as well as singing new works in Warsaw, Amsterdam, Brussels and Mexico City. His collaboration with Michael Finnissy has seen the creation of many new pieces, among them *Maldon*. He was also a founder-member of Graham Johnson's Songmakers' Almanac. He has sung Mozart for Glyndebourne and Opera North, operetta at ENO, and Bach on record and TV (as Christus in Jonathan Miller's staging of the *St Matthew Passion*). Richard Jackson is a professor at the Guildhall School and at the Royal Academy of Music, and has taught as far afield as Australia.

## EXAUDI

EXAUDI is a young ensemble dedicated to fresh and dynamic performances of the most exciting contemporary choral

photo: Lucy Bunthill

music. Formed in 2002 by James Weeks (director) and Juliet Fraser (soprano), and drawing its singers from among Britain's brightest new vocal talents, EXAUDI has garnered substantial acclaim for its innovative, imaginative and fearless approach to a wide-ranging repertoire, which has won many new friends for new music across the UK.

The ensemble's programming typically views contemporary music within larger historical contexts, often combining new music with old, specialising particularly in the music of the early and High Renaissance. It is also responsible for commissioning and creating brand-new works, and has given many world and UK premières by composers including Howard Skempton, Wolfgang Rihm, Michael Finnissy, Elena Firsova and Michael Zev Gordon. EXAUDI is particularly committed to the emerging generation of composers currently in their twenties and early thirties, including John Habron, Chung Shih Hoh, Philip Howard, Dorothy Ker and Claudia Molitor.

The choir has appeared at many major festivals across the UK, and has established exciting relationships with Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and the National Portrait Gallery. It is strongly committed to educational initiatives in both composing and singing, and has given numerous workshops and seminars for organisations such as *spnm*, Purcell School, Cambridge Music Conference and Endymion at the South Bank.

EXAUDI's vocal sound has been much influenced by the lighter, straighter tone favoured by early music ensembles, a timbre ideal for the accurate and vibrant performance of harmonically intricate contemporary music. The group is flexible in number, varying between four and twelve voices according to the repertoire. This is EXAUDI's first disc.

www.exaudi.org.uk



## JAMES WEEKS

DIRECTOR

Born in Blackburn in 1978, James Weeks was Organ Scholar of Queens' College, Cambridge from 1997-2000, where he read Music, and recently completed a PhD in composition at the University of Southampton. His music has been heard across Europe and broadcast on German and Dutch radio. Among recent major performances, his string quartet, *Vertical Diptych*, was featured in Gaudeamus Music Week 2002 in Amsterdam, and his *Two Perscriptions* for piano were played by Michael Finnissy as part of the 2004 Cutting Edge series in London. His work is promoted by the BMIC's New Voices scheme. As a conductor he is known for his championing of contemporary music, first at Queens' and now with EXAUDI. Other recent and forthcoming conducting engagements include work with the ensembles IXION and Endymion. James teaches composition at Winchester and Eton Colleges, gives infrequent organ recitals of new music, writes regularly for a number of music journals, and is a member of the Southampton-based experimental music ensemble Klangsieben.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*Producers* **AARON CASSIDY, JOHN HABRON**
*Associate Producer* **ANDREW TOOVEY**

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